

VZCZCXRO1660
RR RUEHGR
DE RUEHPO #0798/01 3551726
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 211726Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8992
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHAO/AMCONSUL CURACAO 1097
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0074

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARAMARIBO 000798

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR - LLUFTIG
DOL/ILAB FOR TINA McCARTER
DRL/IL FOR TU DANG

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [EIND](#) [ETRD](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [USAID](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE OF WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR INFORMATION IN
SURINAME

REF: (A) STATE 143552 (B) 05 PARAMARIBO 564

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1. (U) In response to ref. A Post provides the following updated information on Suriname's commitment to eliminate the worst forms of child labor, previously submitted in Ref. B.

1A. (U) Since Post reported on the labor situation in Suriname in 2005, the country has ratified ILO Convention 182 regarding the worst forms of child labor. However, ILO Convention 138, the Minimum Age Convention, still awaits ratification. In Suriname there is a discrepancy between the minimum age for labor, which is 14 years, and the compulsory education age, which is 12 years. Convention 138 can only be ratified if the compulsory education age is at least 15 years, thereby conforming with the ILO norm.

Suriname's labor laws do not define the worst forms of child labor or hazardous work. In December 2006 the Government installed a National Commission on child labor, consisting of officials from the Ministries of Labor, Social Affairs, and Education, and representatives from the labor unions, the private sector, and NGOs. This commission is tasked with establishing an authority on child labor as provided for in Article 4 of Convention 182. Once established, the authority will advise the Government on the issues of child labor, review labor legislation and make suggestions for change, and develop a list of occupations considered to be the worst forms of child labor.

1B. (U) The Ministry of Labor's Department of Labor Inspection's approximately 40 inspectors have responsibility to implement and enforce labor laws, including those pertaining to the worst forms of child labor. The labor law prohibits child labor and imposes fines if violated. The fines are however not adequate to punish and deter violations. There is no information available regarding the number of child labor investigations that were conducted over the past year. The government did not provide awareness raising and/or training activities for officials charged with enforcing child labor laws in the last year.

Officials at the Ministry of Labor are in close consultation with the International Labor Organization. A seminar was held in May 2006 that dealt with the prevention of child labor in indigenous communities, among other issues. Surinamese government officials and businesspeople also attended a seminar abroad on the ILO child labor project in the Caribbean.

1C. (U) Since Post reported in 2005, the government has not developed

social programs to prevent and withdraw children from the worst forms of child labor. The Government provides support to vocational programs for dropouts and older children, which can serve as an alternative to work.

Schooling is compulsory until 12 years of age. However, due to a lack of transportation, building facilities, and teachers, some school-age children, particularly in the interior, do not have access to education. School attendance is nominally free through the university level; however, most public schools impose a nominal enrollment fee, ranging from 25 to 115 Surinamese dollars (U.S. \$9 to \$40) per year to cover costs.

1D. (U) The country does not have a comprehensive policy or national program of action on child labor. However, the Ministries of Labor and Social Affairs make reference to combating child labor in their annual policy documents. Government officials have on numerous occasions stressed the importance of combating child labor. The Minister of Labor, Technological Development and Environment stressed recently that even though there is no comprehensive policy regarding the child labor problem, the government is fighting poverty, preventing child abuse, and promoting child rights to combat the conditions conducive to the problem.

1E. (U) Suriname is making limited progress with the child labor problem. The country lacks statistical data regarding the labor environment, more specifically about the child labor market in Suriname. There are however indications of child labor in the western district of Nickerie, and children being put to work in the gold mining and the agriculture sectors, in sawmills, as street vendors, and in the commercial sex industry. Government action to combat child labor should be focused on non-urban as well as urban areas, and the necessary resources will need to be allocated to investigate child labor cases outside of the capital. Suriname needs to ratify ILO Convention 138.

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Schreiber Hughes